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The King's Fury is Like a Lion's Roar

19:23 to 20:11

A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

Janus (19:23): The fear of ADONAI leads to life; one who has it is satisfied and rests untouched by evil (19:23 CJB). This verse functions as a janus, named after the Roman god of endings and beginnings, symbolized by having two faces - one looking back toward the past and one looking forward toward the future. Looking back, this educational **proverb** functions like a bookend with **19:16: He who keeps the mitzvot (guidelines) keeps his life, but he who doesn't care how he lives will die**, and its connection with the preceding unit (**18:22 to 19:23**), suggesting that the one who cares for the needy will himself be fully satisfied and protected by **ADONAI**. But looking forward, this educational **proverb** also introduces a new unit.

Fools and their punishment (19:24 to 20:1): This seven-verse subunit after the introduction follows an alternating pattern of **foolish** actions with the appropriate punishment. This pattern of **foolishness** escalates from **the lazy person (19:24)**, to **the mocker (19:25)**, to the shameful **son** who destroys the family (**19:26-27**), to **the corrupt witness (19:28)**, to **the brawling drunkard** who endangers everyone (**20:1 and 26:9**).³⁹⁵

The lazy person buries his hand in the dish, but doesn't even bother to bring it to his mouth (19:24 CJB). Some people are too **lazy** to eat. This humorous portrayal is certainly an exaggeration. It probably was meant more widely for anyone who starts a project but lacks the energy to finish the job by lifting food to **his mouth (to see link click [Dk](#) - The Lazy Person)**.

If you punish a mocker, the simpleminded will learn a lesson; if you correct the wise, they will be all the wiser (19:25 NLT). The vocabulary of

this **proverb** reminds us of **the mocker** and **the simpleminded** in **Chapters 1-9**. This **proverb** helps us to understand the difficult work of education. **Mockers** cannot learn because **they** become defensive concerning **their** mistakes. **They** make fun of those who try to teach **them**. However, this **proverb** points out that the effect to teach **them** through the kind of physical punishment often associated with learning in **Proverbs** may not help **them**; yet such punishment will teach a lesson to **an** immature **person**, whose defenses are not so high for **the simpleminded (1:4)**. The second colon reminds us that those who already are on the side of wisdom can continue to learn, and so correction directed toward **them** will lead to an increase in **their** knowledge.

One who mistreats his father and evicts his mother is a son who brings them shame and disgrace (19:26 CJB). Children are to honor **their** parents (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bp - Honor Your Parents**), when they not only do not honor but also **shame them**, **they** are worthy of utter contempt. **The proverb** is an observation that serves as a warning against improper behavior toward one's **parents**.

My son, if you stop listening to instruction, you will turn your back on knowledge (19:27 NLT). It is not enough **to heed wise advice** one time; it is a continual process. **Solomon** warns **the son** not to think that **he** will reach a point where no more **instruction** is necessary. Gathering wisdom is a lifelong process. **The father** ironically instructs **the son** to **stop listening to instruction**. The negative consequences expressed in the second colon make it clear that **he** really doesn't want **his son** to follow through on this particular **instruction**.

A corrupt witness mocks justice, and the mouth of the wicked swallow's wrongdoing (19:28 CJB). Yet another **proverb** that condemns **corrupt witnesses**, particularly in court (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bt - Do Not Give False Testimony**), but the principle was surely understood more broadly than that. The second line may be taken to specifically mean **the wicked** say that **their** guilt is not justified.

Judgments are prepared for mockers, and beatings for the backs of fools (19:29 BSB). There is a natural fit between **punishment** and **fools**. **They** deserve it. This observation could serve as a motivation for avoiding such behavior. This **verse** may be an answer to the one immediately preceding **it**, which suggests that **mockers** make fun of **justice**.³⁹⁶

Wine is a mocker and strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by them is not wise (20:1 Hebrew). Alcohol and other mind-altering drugs are the epitome of **foolishness**. **The wise person** desires a clear and healthy mind. Excessive **drinking** can fog the mind, changing perception and affecting reasoning and reaction skills. People have been known to commit really stupid and immoral acts under the influence of **alcohol**. **Solomon** illustrates this vividly: **Who has misery? Who has regret? Who fights and complains all the time? Who gets bruised for no good reason? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who spend their time over wine, those always trying out mixed drinks. Don't gaze at the red wine as it gives its color to the cup. It may glide down smoothly now; but in the end, it bites like a serpent - yes, it strikes like a poisonous snake. Your eyes will see peculiar things, your mind will utter nonsense. You will feel as if lying on the waves of the sea or sprawled on top of the mast - "They hit me, but I didn't feel it! They beat me up, and I didn't even know it! When will I wake up, I'll go get another drink" (23:29-35).**³⁹⁷

The righteous king roots out all evil (20:2-11): Sandwiched within the royal framework (20:2 and 8) is the second list of **fools**, who are now contrasted with **the wise (20:2, 5, and 6)**; the quarreling **fool (20:3)**, **the deluded sluggard (20:4)**, the manipulator (20:5), and the hypocritical masses (20:6). 20:7 both qualifies 20:6 and contrasts **ADONAI's** favor to the diligent **person's** descendants with **the king** who roots out the future offspring of **evildoers (20:8)**. The discerning **person** in 20:5 finds an expression of **the discerning king (20:5)**.



The king's fury is like a lion's roar, to rouse his anger is to risk your life

(20:2 NLT). The brawling **drunkard**, along with the other types of **fools** from **19:24** to **20:1**, is now handed over to **the king**. **This royal proverb** sets forth the fatal and imminent danger of incurring **the king's wrath**. **A lion's roar is like a king's rage, terrifying his victim (19:12a).** The young **lion** claimed **its** prey by **roaring (Psalm 104:21)**, and **no one can deliver it (Isaiah 5:29)**. The dreadful **roar** is not an empty threat. Other royal **proverbs** suggest that **the lion's roar** is in fact **Ha'Shem's roar** against **fools** that threaten **His Kingdom (16:10-15, 19:12, 20:8 and 28)**. **The king's wrath is like a messenger of death, but the wise will appease it (16:14).**³⁹⁸

Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor, only fools insist on quarreling (20:3 NLT). **Proverbs** frequently advocates conflict avoidance. Often fights, even if based on a real offense, create more trouble than they are worth. The **wise** person lets things lie, while the stupid person doesn't hesitate to enter the fray. It is the pride of the **foolish** person and the humility of the **wise** person that motivate **their** respective behaviors.

During winter, the lazy do not plow; at harvest, they will ask, but nothing (20:4 Hebrew). Winter (October to March) was the time for plowing in Palestine. **The Lazy person** cannot bet **themselves** to do such a tiring task. But, actions – or in this case a lack of actions – have consequences. If one doesn't do the work at the beginning of the agricultural season, then how can one expect to reap (literally) the benefits? Colon 2 indicates that **he** asks a question after **the harvest**, and the answer is there is **nothing** in the field. **Lazy** people do not do the work necessary to have adequate food when they need it (see [Be - Don't be Lazy](#)).

Though good advice is deep waters within the heart, a person with understanding will draw it out (20:5 Hebrew). **Advice** is what the sages offer to others in order to give them guidance to navigate the troubles of life. The metaphor of **deep waters** was used in **18:4** to indicate thoughts that are profound and sometimes mysterious, requiring reflection and interpretation. Colon 2 indicates that sometimes it takes a sage to understand a sage.

Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable (20:6 NLT). **The proverb** may be roughly understood as saying, "Talk is cheap." People are willing to claim they are loyal, but when the chips are down, will they really come through? The word translated **say** (Hebrew: *qara*) is more literally, *call out*, pointing to a kind of public declaration. The term **loyal** (Hebrew: *chesed*) expresses the kind of love that flows between two covenant partners (see the

commentary on **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**). In other words, these people will say that they are bound by love, with the implication that they will assist when threats emerge, but the question of the second colon implies that these are often false claims. **The proverb** puts **the wise** on notice not to accept all claims of friendship at face value.

The righteous live a life of integrity; blessed are their children after them (20:7 CJB). The first colon defines **righteousness** in moral terms: they are innocent. Perhaps we should go to **Job** to get an example of an innocent man (**Job 1:1**). Too quickly believers balk at the idea of someone who is "innocent." **Paul**, after all, makes it very clear, even quoting passages in the TaNaKh, that **there is not one who is righteous** (see the commentary on **Romans Aw - The Religious Jew's Lack of Understanding**). However, an innocent **person** is not someone who never **sins (Job 9:1-2)**, but rather **a person** who strives to be obedient and pleasing to **ADONAI**. The point of **the proverb** seems to be found in the second colon, which expresses the influence of **the righteous** on those who observe **them** closely, especially **their children (descendants)**. **The righteous** are good role models to **those** who watch **their** lifestyle.

When a king sits in judgment, he weighs all the evidence, and disperses all evil with his eyes (20:8 Hebrew). This is the picture of the just and wise **king**, who scatters **evil** through **his** deliberate application of law in **his** kingdom. Because of his application of civil law and principles in the Torah, criminal elements are unable to get a foothold. The reference to **the kings' eyes** may reflect the idea that nothing escapes **his** notice. **Wisdom** is a quality especially required for the exercise of proper legal judgements. The history of the monarchy gives us a few concrete examples of this **proverb**. **David** in **Second Samuel Chapters 8 and 9** demonstrates this kind of **justice**, both in terms of external enemies as well as in the practice of judgments internal to **the kingdom**. We also see **the wisdom** of **Solomon** (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon At - A Wise Ruling**).

Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure and free from my sin (20:9 Hebrew). This **proverb** seeks to bring self-awareness to the wise, who are also **righteous**, but may be tempted to become self-righteous. Even the wise must be aware that they are not perfect. They too need to grapple with **sin**. Even the "innocent" **Job (20:7)** recognizes that **he** too had faults (**Job 9:2**). To be unaware of this would lead to a wrong assessment and then to **sin**. Even so, a number of **proverbs** implicitly recognize that some people are **righteous** while others are **wicked**. This **proverb** tempers this otherwise fairly strict contrast.³⁹⁹

False weights and false measures, ADONAI detests them both (20:10 CJB), based on the Torah (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ev - Honest Weights and Measures**). This **proverb** puts the full weight of **ADONAI's** morality and **justice** behind **the king's** throne, and keeps the compassion of **the** preceding **proverb** from being abused. **False weights and measures**, which represent all forms of fraud and **deceit**, are concrete expressions of the generalizations of **evil** in **verse 8** and **sin** in **verse 9**. Since **ADONAI detests them both**, **the king** will rid **his kingdom** of **false weights and measures** and **those** who used **them**. In practice, **the king (Second Samuel 14:26)** and **the priests (Exodus 30:13)** set the standard.

Even children make themselves known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright (20:11 NIV)? As noted above, **ADONAI detests deceit**, but now is tempered by the reality that human beings are **deceitful** from **their youth (Genesis 8:21)**. But if even **a child** can practice **fraud** and **deception (verse 10)**, how much more **a grown person (verse 9)**? Thus, **the proverb** again instructs us to both abhor **sin** and to show **mercy** to **the sinner** when **he** commits **evil**, as **he** certainly will. Upon the realization of **his sin**, **the sinner** should enter through the inner veil and figuratively throw **himself** on **the Mercy Seat** of **ADONAI** (see **Exodus Fs - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**).⁴⁰¹

*Dear **Messiah**, **You** are the **Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5b-c)**. Though **You** are merciful when it comes to disciplining **Your children**, **You** will ultimately deal with those who reject **You (Revelation 19:15-16)**. As Aslan in Narnia, **You** are a **Great and Powerful Lion**, before whom no one can appear before without their knees knocking. **King Belshazzar** became pale and **his** knees knocked together when **he** merely saw the hand of **God** writing a message on **his** palace wall. **You** are far greater than **handwriting on a wall (Dani'el 5:6)**. **You** have given a clear warning that those who don't trust in **Messiah Yeshua** will incur **Your wrath**. So I said: **It is a people whose heart goes astray, who do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, "They shall never enter into My rest" (Hebrews 3:11)**. Thank **You** for being such a **righteous King**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*